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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 04 BAGHDAD 000298

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: ARAB LEAGUE AMBASSADOR TO IRAQ TO RESIGN

Classified By: Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad per 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (S) SUMMARY: In a meeting with the Ambassador on January 25, Arab League Ambassador to Iraq Mukhtar Lamani said the Arab League failed to support him politically. As a result, Lamani said he is resigning. He passed a copy of his resignation letter to the Ambassador and said it was confidential and had not been announced (see para 7). Lamani

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said he will stay engaged on Iraq in his next job, most likely at an institute in Canada. Lamani also warned that his contacts say Al Qaeda is openly taking control of many areas in Diyala and Baghdad. END SUMMARY.

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Disillusionment with Arab League  
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¶2. (S) Lamani opened the meeting by saying he was very frustrated with the Arab League and had submitted his resignation as Ambassador to Iraq for the third and final time. He said he planned to leave by the end of February. Lamani stated the Arab League Secretary General Amr Moussa insisted he come to Cairo for consultations, but Lamani said he would not be persuaded to change his mind. He passed a copy of his resignation letter to the Ambassador and said it was confidential and had not been announced (see para 7).

¶3. (S) Lamani said he had spent one year in the red zone in Baghdad without logistical support from the Arab League, but his real problem with the organization was political. Lamani said he did not perceive he had the Arab League's support to do real work, and he felt they sent him merely for appearances. He said only the Iraqis supported him. Lamani stated he asked to hold a special summit on Iraq with heads of three or four states to discuss reconciliation, the political process, and the economy, but despite his preparations, nothing happened. He said Arabs find it easy to make decisions but do not implement them. The Ambassador agreed that the Arab League had not done enough given the importance of Iraq to the region and said there was a gap between the group's rhetoric and action on the ground.

¶4. (S) Lamani said he perceived some Arabs are pushing for Iraq to become a battlefield with Iran. He noted he had relationships of trust with Iranian officials when he was the permanent observer of the Organization of the Islamic Conference to the United Nations. However, he continued, the Iranians never contacted him while he served as Arab League Ambassador to Iraq. Lamani opined the Iranians knew he had no support from the Arab League and did not see him as a useful interlocutor, especially since they had their own agenda.

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Next Steps For Lamani  
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15. (S) Lamani said he was going to go to Cairo soon but was packing all his belongings and might not return to Baghdad. He said he might come back to present his replacement, but he is hesitant to return because of the dangerous security situation. Lamani said he planned to stay engaged on Iraq and is considering offers from two different institutes in Canada to work on projects related to Iraq.

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Lamani Warns of Al Qaeda Entrenchment  
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16. (S) Before departing, Lamani informed the Ambassador about some of his recent meetings. He claimed he was the only person in contact with all the parties in Iraq, except Al Qaeda and the Saddamists. Lamani said he met with a group of Sunni and Shia intellectuals from Diyala who said Al Qaeda was openly controlling some of the areas in the province. Lamani said he had met in Amman with a group of Jaysh al-Islami members from Baqubah who were also complaining about Iraqi Al Qaeda members taking over the area. Lamani warned that Al Qaeda might shift into politics and expand its influence. He said Al Qaeda also is controlling the Ba'athists and is dominating the Mujahideen Shura Council, an umbrella insurgent organization.

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Full Text of Lamani's Resignation Letter  
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17. (S) Begin text:

The Arab League Mission  
Iraq

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His Excellency the Secretary General,  
  
Greetings,

First: History has taught us that the land of Iraq is the cradle of civilization, and that the inhabitants of this land, through their history which is equal in length to the length of history itself, were able with their beautiful and rich mosaic, to make Iraq a beacon of science and a giving land with a civilized, religious, intellectual and cultural impact

History has taught us that the people of Iraq knew through their long history hardships and tragedies perhaps worse than their current hardship, but they were always able to overcome such predicaments.

However, Iraq's hard ship is characterized with a special danger which can be summarized as an attempt to destroy the cohesion of the beautiful Iraqi mosaic. This hardship is affected by various internal, regional and international factors with each factor having its own complexities and is exasperated by interaction with other factors.

11. Internally, the people of Iraq do not currently agree on a single diagnosis of their problems and subsequently on the obligations which should be fulfilled to achieve a qualitative change in their relations.

These relations are currently characterized with a complete lack of trust and an escape into reactions and entrenchment and the use of violence which has become frivolous, primitive and contradictory to the residue of this old culture.

The people of Iraq are in a situation which aims to destroy their social coherence negating the roots that extend into the depth of history.

The factions of the people of Iraq, as in the case of all human religious or ethnic factions, have extremists at their fringes. But, the extremists of Iraqi factions have moved from the fringes to the center dedicating their factions to action and reaction and blind generalizations that change features and displace people and kill on the basis of identity.

As a result of this situation, the relationship of the people of Iraq has become characterized with negation of their Iraqi identity, while they are convinced that no party alone can be in charge of their country's affairs. Their problem is not in autocracy, but rather in the method and extent of the participation of the other.

The people of Iraq are suffering from a severe case of sectarian and emotional tension, and they are not yet convinced that the correct and the only reinforcement for saving their country lies in reaching an agreement that is based on having one, and only one, victor which is Iraq itself.

12. Iraq has a complicated neighborhood, which is no less complicated than its interior with its historical, spiritual and ethnic dimensions. In addition, Iraq is affiliated with an area that is of priority for the International economy. Consequently, the concerns and interests of the neighborhood and the Great Powers intersect and contradict with each other in numerous and overlapping areas.

In addition, the international dimensions of relations with the neighborhood are reflected directly on, and influence, the Iraqi arena. In fact, what makes the Iraqi situation more complicated is the fact that Iraq has become a field for a number of battles by numerous parties including states, organizations and movements, and I believe that the people of Iraq, in their various shades, will be committing a fatal mistake if they continue their attempts to strengthen their country through external coalitions

The only solution and guarantor for connecting the old past of Iraq with its future is to strengthen Iraq through an agreement between its people in a national project to guarantee equal rights of citizenship to all and to make that successful through a state based on institutions. This can restore to Iraq its historical, pioneering and influential role as a model to be followed. The people of Iraq must remember that their unity in the past was a principal factor, which allowed their ancestors to play a historical role in building human civilization.

Second: I came to Iraq about a year ago, as a result of an Arab decision to contribute and strive to achieve an Iraqi agreement and make it a solid reality through following up on the developments from inside and its external reflections. I

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became strongly convinced that the success and the strengthening of Iraq is in the interest of the Iraqi people, the neighboring countries and the world. The deterioration and fall of Iraq is a catastrophe for all, because of its religious, sectarian, ethnic and national implications.

The Iraqi people I found in Iraq, through this mission, are threatened in their depth, hungry and insecure. The looks on the eyes of the children are full of deep questions about what is happening and why. Very briefly, what I have witnessed through this sad year and under circumstances which can be described in the very least as absurd and inconsistent with any criteria I have known during my 27 years as an international organization official who had opportunities to live in other areas of crisis in the world.

The components and factions of the Iraqi people may have strong convictions about the suffering they experienced though their long history with differences in levels of

suffering in this or that period, but I felt during this year that suffering did not take away the Iraqi's peoples self-esteem, courage and dignity. If the Iraqi people can stand up again and if they can strengthen their country by reaching an internal agreement among themselves, Iraq will not need the help of anyone not only because of the material fortunes God has granted them (Oil and water) but also because of the civilizational and spiritual fortunes. My fear is that Iraq does not forget how others dealt with it while it is suffering from a unique and severe hardship that is shaking its structure and is striking at the depth of its society and destroying its mosaic.

Third: I strived during this year to be in contact with all Iraqi parties through developing truthful and rigorous relations free of flattery and characterized with seriousness and candidness and I can confirm that I have no problem with any Iraqi party. The only problem, in my opinion, is in their relationship with one another and their strong feeling that every party is a victim of the other parties. Perhaps this is the common factor between the people of Iraq during this difficult period.

Fourth: The Arabs, in their last summit in Khartoum on the 24th.March, 2006, made the decision (paragraph 8) of "the immediate opening of a Mission for the Arab League in Baghdad in order to activate the Arab role in Iraq".

The Mission was opened without any material or security resources, for reasons the details of which need not be mentioned here, under difficult and dangers circumstances. In order to facilitate contact with all Iraqis, the Mission was established outside the secured Green Zone. The Mission was able to survive during this year because many Iraqis helped and supported it because of relationships established based on trust and with one goal to help Iraq stand anew as a beacon for a radiant civilization. Those Iraqis included Kurds, Arabs, Turcomen, Christians, Shiite and Sunni Muslims, Sabian, Yazidi, Shabak and the list can go on.

I cannot hide the fact that I had no illusions when the Arabs made their decision as they usually do in their diplomatic literature (easy decisions without implementation). But what led me to accept the mission, is the challenge and the strong desire to help the people of Iraq no matter how little our contributions are. I accepted the mission and did not deal with it at any moment as a diplomat. Instead, I dealt with it from my heart and with simplicity considering the people of Iraq as my people. I was careful to have a balanced relationship with equal distance from all shades and parties focusing on activating everything that brings them closer together through political agreement and national cohesion.

I came to Baghdad during a period in which the UN and the world considered Baghdad as the most dangerous area in the world, and I tried during the early months in my contacts to listen to politicians, men of religion, intellectuals, tribes, and civil society. I came without any security or material help from the States that sent me. These were the same states that directed its own accredited diplomats in Iraq to reside in Amman and did not allow them to travel to Baghdad despite the financial and security resources for their protection. The Mission (the term Mission is risky, because it is composed of two individuals only) was able to survive throughout the year under circumstances that are difficult, if not impossible, to describe had it not been for faith and the challenge.

Fifth: In the total absence of cohesive and serious Arab vision for dealing with the matter and even the lack of awareness of the necessity of finding such vision in all of its political, security and reconstruction dimensions, and the resort of sum to patched positions based on narrow basis which does not necessarily or principally take the supreme

interest of the Iraqi people and ending its predicament into account by helping strengthen their country through national unity and insuring connecting the future of Iraq with its glorious and old past

My conviction that trust and creditability alone are not helping, and will not help, Iraq created inside me a strong feeling of disappointment and oppression in the face of the suffering which I was a witness to throughout this year, as well as feelings of contradiction between what a person can wish for Iraq and what he can see in fact on the ground

The Iraqi people, and I mean the common citizens, have reached a position in which they do not need conferences making polite and beautiful, political or religious statements which are general moral and tolerant principles that cannot be disagreed upon by two individuals, but regrettably are without any impact on the daily security and living reality of the citizens which is becoming increasingly bad and terrifying

As for the logistic matters related to this Mission and the bargaining associated with it, it has become unworthy of commenting on or even mentioning.

Sixth: In the face of this bitter and painful reality and because of the impossibility of accomplishing anything serious and positive, at least for me, I find myself compelled with pain and sadness to inform your Excellency that I have decided to withdraw from this mission as of the end of February 2007, and awaits your Excellency's appointment of a replacement who may be able to accomplish what I was not able to do

Finally, I would like to express my thanks for your understanding. Thanks are also due to all my colleagues at the National Secretariat for their support and friendship.

I would like to also make special mention of my comrade in this adventure Tareq Abdel Sallam, the only one from the General Secretariat who accepted to join me in this mission and continued to work with firmness and faith despite the security circumstances and the associated threats to our lives which we faced several times imposing on our families a year of fear from the unknown and a terrifying pressure, which I am sure they will never forget for a long time

Thanks are also due to the local workers in the Mission for supporting the project despite the threats and the extreme danger they were exposed to while commuting day and night.

Your Excellency the Secretary General, please accept my highest appreciation and respect.

//Signed///  
Mukhtar Lamani  
Chief of the Permanent Mission  
of the Arab League in  
Baghdad

End text.  
KHALILZAD